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NOTE ON CANT. VII. 6.

I VENTURE to add one more to the passages of Canticles, the text of which I have recently endeavoured to restore in the JEWISH QUARTERLY REVIEW (July, 1898, and in this number).

Siegfried renders Cant. vii. 6 thus—

“Thy head above is like Carmel,
And the pendent hair of thy head is like purple,
In its locks the king is held captive.”

The king, he says, is the “king” of the marriage-week, i. e. the bridegroom; the poet therefore prefixes the article (המלך). He takes “purple” to be equivalent to “darkly shining.” “Thy head above” is a free rendering of ראשך עליך. The repetition of “thy head” in the second line is strange the order “neck, eyes, nose (ver. 5), head” is also surprising, as both Siegfried and Budde remark. Bickell would cut off line 1, together with the ו before דלת in line 2. Budde thinks that line 1 may have been displaced, and be the line which he would gladly see after ver. 4 a. Replacing it, and reading עלי for עליך, we should get—

Thy neck is like an ivory tower,
Thy head upon it is like Carmel.

It is strange that these three practised critics have overlooked the only probable solution of the textual problem of Cant. vii. 6. ודלת ראשך בארומן מלך is (to put it briefly) a dittogram of ראשך עליך כברמל which precedes. Either form of the clause is more correct in one half than the other. Read ver. 6 thus,—

ודלת ראשך כברמל נעמה כפרדם רמנים

"The pendent locks of thy head are like Carmel; pleasant are they as an orchard of pomegranate trees" (cf. iv. 13). כְּרִמָּל in אֶרְנוֹן is plainly some word which should follow נֶעֱמָה; probably נֶעֱמָה, which may have been written with a mark of abbreviation (נֶעֱמָ), and then by transposition and corruption have become גֶּמָן. Moslem poets, we are told by Delitzsch, are wont to compare locks of hair to long leaves, like those of the vine, and long branches, like those of the palm. The leaves of the pomegranate are lanceolate and glossy, but small (Tristram). But the "pleasantness" of the tree is, in my hypothesis, here referred to (cf. iv. 13), and this arises from its very beautiful blossom and fruit. From Carmel to purple the transition of thought is not very easy; from Carmel to the pomegranate-trees, which grow under Carmel, it is easy and natural.

I have said nothing of the רְהִיטִים of the Massoretic text. This word means "troughs" (Gen. xxx. 38, 41; Ex. ii. 16). The learning and ingenuity of the latest commentators cannot devise a justification of the assumed meaning "locks" (so the Revised Version; the Authorized gives "galleries"). רְהִיטִים, however, is a corruption of רִמְנִים; מ became ט, נ became ה. The ב before רְהִיטִים, together with אֶסּוּר, represents פִּרְרִים; פ became ב, ר became ו. I can see no other solution; if a doubt be possible with regard to the second half of it, no hesitation can be admissible with regard to the first.

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